

THE
PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN

AND
ITS ANTECEDENTS,

AS DEVELOPED BY THE

REPORT OF MAJ. GEN. GEO. B. McCLELLAN,

AND OTHER

PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS.

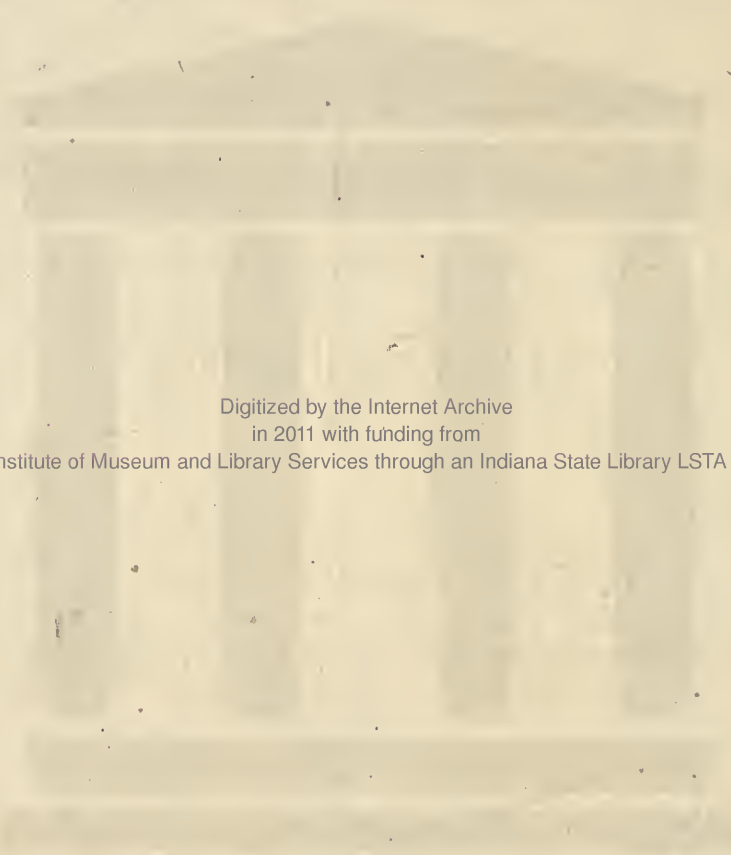
BY

J. G. BARNARD,

LIEUTENANT COLONEL OF ENGINEERS AND BRIGADIER GENERAL OF VOLUNTEERS, AND CHIEF ENGINEER IN THE ARMY OF THE
POTOMAC FROM ITS ORGANIZATION TO THE CLOSE OF THE PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN.



WASHINGTON, D. C.:
PUBLISHED BY THE UNION CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE.
1864.



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PREFATORY REMARKS.

The year of our Lord, 1863, opened upon the darkest period in the history of the momentous struggle in which we are yet engaged. The Army of the Potomac, which had gone forth in April of the previous year, at a period when victory had recently everywhere favored our banners, and it seemed left only to give one vigorous blow, to quell forever the rebellion, had been disastrously driven from Richmond, and called back to Washington, to arrive barely in time to save that city from the grasp of an enemy resuscitated in strength, and with a renewed audacity, assuming everywhere a vigorous offensive action. In the West the course of things had but too faithfully followed the reverses of the East. The renewed hope which followed the repulse of the rebel armies from Maryland had been darkened by the long delays which ensued, and the subsequent disastrous failure at Fredericksburg.

Military calamities, disheartening as they might be, would have been of comparatively little moment, however, had military calamities been all that darkened the aspects of the time. The country was rich in men and means, and its resources had as yet been lightly drawn upon. It had put forth its strength, indeed, but not its whole strength. Men did not feel dismayed because they doubted the ability of the nation to carry on the struggle to a successful issue, but because, for the time, the power of the nation was partially paralyzed. Yet there never was a moment when the public safety, and the safety of the common cause more urgently demanded the exertion of all the nation's strength. Why, then, did men doubt? Where was the origin of this paralysis? It was in the charge, audaciously made, impudently persisted in; that to the blunders and incapacity of the Administration, all our disasters were due; that, with such incapacity at the head of affairs, our resources, though they were poured forth like water, would, like water, too, be spilt on the ground. Men will sacrifice much in great emergencies, but they never *will* give their lives or their money merely that such treasures may be ignorantly or wantonly wasted.

"Had McClellan but had *his* way, had he not been interfered with, had not his army been reduced and taken away from him, and his movements in a thousand ways hampered and balked, had he, in short, had the sole control of military affairs, all would have been different. Richmond would have been ours, the rebellion would have been subdued, and, instead of disaster and prolonged war, a triumphant peace might have been our happier lot." To such charges against the Administra-

tion which had raised him to his position, and which, through the President, had ever showed him unwearied kindness, and given him all the confidence it *could* give, Gen. McClellan lent the full weight of his name and reputation. Throwing himself into the arms of a *party* bitterly hostile to that Administration, associated with men who loaded the agents of the Government with reproach, and among whom were some so insensible to the honor of the country and the sacredness of the cause as to court foreign mediation and to meditate a disgraceful and humiliating peace, to *him*, and to the erroneous ideas disseminated concerning *his* capacity, merits, and agency, the paralysis of doubt was due, as it was to him were justly ascribable the disasters which brought our military affairs to so low an ebb. * * * * *

It was under such circumstances that, in writing an official report, at the request of General McClellan himself, of the engineering operations of the Army of the Potomac, I deemed it my duty to state what I believed to be the sources of failure of the campaign of the Peninsula. The opinions therein written down were no afterthoughts. Six months before I had formed them, and when I spoke at all, (which I did not do openly,) *expressed them*. I had formed them painfully, reluctantly, at a period when political questions had not become involved with this subject, and no such causes existed to influence in any manner my judgment. It was at a period when for Gen. McClellan I entertained the warmest personal regard—a feeling which I distinctly and sincerely expressed in writing on leaving him in August, 1862. With no man have I ever, with a more absolute freedom from any other feeling than one of personal kindness, been so long closely associated, and if, at any moment, there seemed to me to exist some slight grounds for complaint, they were never such as to be remembered, or to have any abiding place in my breast.

But there are cases in which personal feelings must be allowed little weight. The destinies of nations cannot be trifled with, and in all that affects them, convictions of truth *must* be uttered. The Report of the Engineering Operations of the Army of the Potomac, and the statements of these pages, are the utterances I am constrained to make.

The review which follows was first prepared as a magazine article. It has not been thought necessary to alter the phraseology, though another form of publication is adopted.

J. G. B.

WASHINGTON, May 10, 1864.

PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN.

Gen. McClellan had been called to the command of the Army of the Potomac with an unanimity of feeling and lavish bestowal of confidence, which stand almost alone in our history. The army looking upon Gen. Scott as past the age of further active service, and upon most of the officers of rank as superannuated or otherwise incapable of meeting such an emergency, hailed the advent of a new chief, whose juvenile promise, whose thorough military education, and whose already extended reputation, seemed to give assurance of precisely the one thing needed—a capable leader.

Under such circumstances, neither the nation, nor the Administration, nor the army, were disposed to exercise—nor *did* they exercise—undue pressure. Every indulgence was extended to one upon whom so heavy a responsibility had been laid, for the acknowledged difficulties of the situation, and for his own inexperience and want of preparation.

Now, had Gen. McClellan been a Napoleon, with the prestige of a hundred victories—or even a Scott—old in the regard of the people; old in experience of war, even upon a comparatively limited scale, but rejuvenated in years—had he been either of these, he might, with propriety, if he thought the case demanded it, have drawn heavily upon the indulgence so freely extended. Being neither, it was important that he should make the lightest possible draft; that, at the very earliest moment, he should *do* something to confirm, continue, and justify the nation's confidence. Of all Gen. McClellan's faults and incapacities, nothing—not even his irresolution and mismanagement in face of the enemy, nor his inability ever, in any case, to *act* when the time came—furnishes a clearer proof of the lack of those qualities which make a great general or a great statesman, than his failure to do this.

Let it be granted that it was not best to make any great movement till the winter of 1861-'62 had wholly passed away, (though there were the strongest political reasons* against such delay,) yet Gen. McClellan should have been aware that, unless his prestige, through these long months, should be supported by

some deeds, he would find himself virtually destitute of the power to carry out his own plans when the moment proper for such a movement should arrive; and so it happened. But, after six long months of omission, he added to his imprudence the positive folly of making an extravagant and senseless draft upon the confidence of the Administration and the public, which in the beginning had been so generously given him, but which he had so lightly permitted to be, in a measure, lost.

Grant, again, that the lower Chesapeake *was* the true line of approach to Richmond, and the sole route by which to attain results of such magnitude as Gen. McClellan predicted from its adoption, yet, it was nevertheless true that this route was strongly disapproved by the President, and by many whose judgment carried great influence, and that it involved, in the minds of not a few, great danger to the capital. Yet, in the face of all this, Gen. McClellan, who had never furnished any adequate evidence of his ability to plan or execute a great campaign, persisted in carrying off his army, at enormous expense, to a distant point, leaving that enemy, to whom he attributes a force of no less than one hundred and fifty thousand men, "well disciplined and under able leaders," confronting Washington, with nothing but the garrison of the place, and its very imperfect system of fortifications, to protect it. The line of forts on the Virginia side of the Potomac had been hastily thrown up, and was really, at that time, considering its great extent, very incomplete and weak; on the Maryland side it was so imperfect as hardly to deserve the name of a fortified line.

Gen. Barnard, in his official report, says: "When the army was to go by Annapolis, I felt confident that one half would be no sooner embarked than the other would be ordered back to Washington." No one could, we think, have spent a week in Washington, at this period, without being convinced that, whether reasonably or not, such would have been the result of a mere demonstration of the enemy against the city.

[Gen. Barnard goes on to say that, as early as the middle of October, 1861, Gen. McClellan had, by his own statements, 76,285 men *disposable for an advance*, (a number constantly

* Alluding to the danger—great at that time—of European intervention.

and rapidly increasing; that for three months thereafter the weather and roads were unusually favorable for field operations; that, too, it was at this very period that the blockade of the Potomac commenced, that the disreputable disaster of Ball's Bluff occurred, and that, for six weeks, a comparatively weak enemy had "flaunted his hateful banner in the very sight of the Capitol;" and continues:]

In his apology to the President and exposition of his pet scheme of "changing his base" of operations to the lower Chesapeake, Gen. McClellan says:

When I was placed in command of the armies of the United States, I immediately turned my attention to the whole field of operations, regarding the Army of the Potomac as only one, while the most important, of the masses under my command.

I confess that I did not then appreciate the total absence of a general plan which had before existed, nor did I know that utter disorganization and want of preparation pervaded the western armies.

I took it for granted that they were nearly, if not quite, in condition to move towards the fulfillment of my plans. I acknowledge that I made a great mistake.

I sent at once, with the approval of the executive, officers I considered competent, to command in Kentucky and Missouri. Their instructions looked to prompt movements. I soon found that the labor of creation and organization had to be performed there; transportation, arms, clothing, artillery, discipline, all were wanting. These things required time to procure them.

The generals in command have done this work most creditably, but we are still delayed. I had hoped that a general advance could be made during the good weather of December; I was mistaken.

Take this in connection with the paragraph of page 42,* and we are bound to believe that no sooner did he reach the supreme command than he deliberately deferred all action of the Army of the Potomac, not because it was not ready to act, but until "a general advance could be made during the good weather of December." Without commenting upon the censure cast upon his illustrious and venerable predecessor, Gen. Scott, for the "total absence of a general plan," &c., "the utter disorganization and want of preparation in the western armies," &c., we remark that if the western armies were unprepared, it was mainly because of his own insatiable demands for everything the nation could furnish, for all that he asked for was granted, as much as if he had been already commander-in-chief; moreover that, though he kept the Army of the Potomac spell-bound, waiting for "disorganized" and "unprepared" armies to move, those very armies actually *did move*, took Fort Henry, Fort Donelson, Columbus and Nashville, reached the very southern borders of Tennessee, and fought the battle of Shiloh before the Army of the Potomac had fairly inaugurated its campaign. Indeed, an admirer of Gen. McClellan's strategy of that day entered into a long newspaper argument to show why this great movement of the *right wing* must take place *before* the Army of the Potomac could be released from its compulsory inactivity.

Gen. McClellan cannot assign the mud obstacle, (hitherto so much insisted upon,) as an apology for inaction in a region selected by

himself, and where, according to his own most formal statements, now published with his report, he believes that the roads are *passable at all seasons of the year*. Let us therefore accept his apology—he was *waiting* for the "combined" movements of other armies which *actually moved*—*effected great conquests and fought one desperate pitched battle*, before the campaign of his own Army of the Potomac had commenced!

[The author states that even if mud and weather were adequate causes against inaugurating a great campaign, it was no reason that nothing should be done.

Norfolk might have been captured, and its acquisition was easy after Burnside's capture of Roanoke Island—its possession of vast importance in connection with Gen. McClellan's meditated campaign.

He also states that the fitting up of the Merrimac as an iron-clad ram, was well known to the Navy Department, which urgently desired the capture of the place, foreboding the disaster which actually befell us.

He then discusses Gen. McClellan's estimates of the rebel forces "on the Potomac," and shows their discrepancy and their improbability.

In an *official statement* to the President, Gen. McClellan estimated those forces in October, 1861, at 150,000 men, *well drilled* and ably commanded. He states in his report, that "from the Report of the Chief of the Secret Service" there were on the 8th March, 1862, 102,500 men on the Potomac, and 13,500 in the Shenandoah Valley, 115,500 in all. Gen. Barnard quotes the "Count of Paris," who was perfectly acquainted, and indeed connected, with the "Secret Service," to show that on the 10th of March the rebel force on the Potomac was but 70,000 men; and again, in a note, he proves that Gen. McClellan himself did not, on the 2d of March, believe that the rebel force on the Potomac, was over 60,000 or 70,000 men, and goes on to say:]

It is next to certain that nothing like the numbers given, even by the lowest estimate were in front of us, from Fredericksburg to Leesburg, at that time, and also that the evacuation commenced several weeks before the 8th of March. Wm. Henry Hurlbert, who certainly had most excellent opportunities of judging, and whose admiration of Gen. McClellan would not cause him to err consciously on the unfavorable side, says:—

I have reason to believe that, when the history of the present war shall come to be written fairly and in full, it will be found that Gen. Johnson never intended to hold Manassas and Centerville against any serious attack; that his army at these points had suffered greatly during the autumn and winter of 1861-2; that from October to March he never had an effective force of more than 40,000 under his orders; that his preparations for an evacuation were begun as early as October, 1861; and that after that time he lay there simply in observation. * * *

Just as the movement to the lower Chesapeake was about to be executed, the appearance of the long-expected Merrimac threw the whole scheme again into uncertainty. Now, though the "power" of the Monitor may have been

"satisfactorily demonstrated" by the combat which occurred, it never was "satisfactorily demonstrated" that she could neutralize the Merrimac. It was all conjecture. All that the Secretary of the Navy, or Mr. Fox—all that Commodore Goldsborough—could affirm, was that she should not escape from Hampton Roads. The filling of Hampton Roads with transports, under such circumstances, was attended with great risk. The Prince de Joinville says:

These were the circumstances in which I arrived at Fort-ress Monroe. Soon the Roads were filled with vessels coming from Alexandria or Annapolis, and filled, some with soldiers, some with horses, cannon, and munitions of all kinds. Sometimes I counted several hundred vessels at the anchorage, and among them twenty or twenty-five large steam transports waiting for their turn to come up to the quay and land the fifteen or twenty thousand men whom they brought. The reader may judge how fearful would have been the catastrophe had the Merrimac suddenly appeared among this swarm of ships, striking them one after another, and sending to the bottom these human hives with all their inmates! The Federal authorities, both naval and military, here underwent several days of the keenest anxiety. Every time that a smoke was seen above the trees which concealed the Elizabeth River, men's hearts beat fast. But the Merrimac never came. She allowed the landing to take place without opposition.

Why did she do this?

She did not come because her position at Norfolk, as a constant menace, secured without any risk two results of great importance. In the first place, she kept paralyzed in Hampton Roads the naval forces assembled to join the land army in the attack upon Yorktown; in the second place—and this was the principal object—she deprived the Federal army of all the advantages which the possession of the James would have secured to it in a campaign of which Richmond was the base.

[Gen. McClellan draws strongly upon the credulity of his readers when he asserts that the enemy abandoned Manassas on learning that the movement to the Peninsula was *intended*. With the force he believes them to have had, (115,000 men) and "able leaders," "a serious menace upon Washington, to say nothing of a serious attack," would have frustrated the movement to the Peninsula, by placing Washington itself in great danger. Gen. Barnard says: "The truth is, the enemy abandoned Manassas because his force was too weak to permit him to remain longer where he was. He abandoned it after the President's orders for an attack upon him where he was had been given;" and proceeds:]

Having with such affluence of argument demonstrated to the President the superiority of his "plan"—having tenaciously cherished it for four long months—having persisted, even against risks of no ordinary magnitude, and against the settled convictions of the President, in carrying it out, we cannot doubt that at least Gen. McClellan has perfect knowledge of the new theater of war upon which he is entering—or, at least, such knowledge as would justify his assumptions and approve his military judgment. What, then, is our astonishment when we find that he carried his army into a region of which he was wholly ignorant—that the quasi information he had about it was all erroneous—that within twelve miles of the outposts of troops under his command a powerful defensive line had been thrown up

during the winter and spring, of which he knew nothing whatever, though it lay across his meditated line of march, and altered the whole character of the problem—that the roads, "passable at all seasons" were of the most horrible character, and the country a wilderness. His own account of his information is given as follows, (p. 74):

As to the force and position of the enemy, the information then in our possession was vague and untrustworthy. Much of it was obtained from the staff officers of Gen. Wool, and was simply to the effect that Yorktown was surrounded by a continuous line of earthworks, with strong water batteries on the York River, and garrisoned by not less than 15,000 troops, under command of Gen. J. E. Magruder. Maps, which had been prepared by the topographical engineers under Gen. Wool's command, were furnished me, in which the Warwick River was represented as flowing parallel to, but not crossing, the road from Newport News to Williamsburg, making the so-called Mulberry Island a real island; and we had no information as to the true course of the Warwick across the Peninsula, nor of the formidable line of works which it covered.

And again (p. 75):

In the commencement of the movement from Fort Monroe, serious difficulties were encountered from the want of precise topographical information of the country in advance. Correct local maps were not to be found, and the country, though known in its general features, we found to be inaccurately described in essential particulars in the only maps and geographical memoirs or papers to which access could be had. Erroneous courses to streams and roads were frequently given, and no dependence could be placed on the information thus derived. This difficulty has been found to exist with respect to most portions of the State of Virginia, through which my military operations have extended.

* * * * *

The withdrawal of the corps of Gen. McDowell from this expedition is the great incident upon which have been based the fiercest invectives against the Administration for its "interference," and the charges upon it of responsibility for the failure of the campaign. We shall go no further into the matter here than to say, first, that the decision of the corps commanders (pp. 59 and 60) and the approval of the Secretary of War (p. 60) were the sole points of understanding between Gen. McClellan and the War Department. Notwithstanding that Gen. McClellan was in the vicinity of Washington eighteen days after these conditions were established, he never had, or took pains to have an understanding as to how they were to be executed. The *very day* he sailed (April 1) he sent to the Adjutant General a statement of his dispositions, and this, submitted by the Secretary of War to military advisers, and decided by them to be *not* a fulfillment of the conditions, prompted and justified the order withdrawing McDowell. With the Secretary of War and his advisers, it was simply a question whether the conditions which the President imposed in approving, or rather in *permitting*, Gen. McClellan's eccentric movement, had been fulfilled. They had *not* been fulfilled, and the whole thing had been carried on from the beginning in disregard, not only of the President's wishes, but of his positive orders, and of the conditions which he (through a council of war) imposed upon the movement.

Citing the order detaining McDowell, Gen. McClellan resorts to the unworthy subterfuge

of representing it as a *withdrawal of troops* from his command by the President, in violation of his promise "that nothing of the kind should be repeated," (he refers to a previous withdrawal of Blenker's division—a body of troops of which he had more than once expressed his determination to rid himself in some way,) "that I might rest assured that the campaign should proceed with no further deductions from the force upon which its operations had been planned;" whereas it was simply an enforcement of the conditions upon which the President reluctantly sanctioned the plan. He goes on to say:

To me the blow was most discouraging. It frustrated all my plans for impending operations. It fell when I was too deeply committed to withdraw. It left me incapable of continuing operations which had been begun. It compelled the adoption of another, a different, and less effective plan of campaign. It made rapid and brilliant operations impossible. It was a fatal error.

The very circumstances he here details stultify his conclusions. "Rapid and brilliant operations" were more than ever imposed upon him. When Napoleon, with a handful of men, drove the Austrians out of Italy, though twice and thrice placed, by the paucity of his numbers, in almost desperate situations, it was not by admitting that "rapid and brilliant operations" were "impossible," (a word, by the by, which he ever repudiated,) but by recognizing that *in them alone* his hope lay.

[Gen. Barnard goes on to state that, having found himself stopped by an obstacle, the existence of which he ought to have known, but of which he was inexcusably ignorant—having the success of the campaign and his own reputation, and even the safety of his army, jeopardized by this unforeseen impediment—he should have overcome it at once, at all hazards, and states his belief that a well conducted assault would have succeeded. He states, too, that Gen. McClellan, to justify his failure to assault, has quoted a description of the enemy's works, as they were at the end of the siege, a whole month after we encountered them; Johnston's army being engaged all that time in strengthening them. Those who have seen what our armies do in a week, or even in a day, in fortifying themselves, can well comprehend the disingenuousness of such a plea. The author proceeds:]

We shall not pause here to dwell upon the battle of Williamsburg. That a fierce battle was fought at a point where there was a strong probability that such a rencontre would occur, (for it was reasonable to suppose that the enemy would require further time to secure his retreat and save his trains, and here was a fortified position perfectly adapted to such a temporary stand,*) that it occurred without foresight, preparation, or orders, and that there was utter confusion with regard to the command and direction of the troops, that the Commanding General himself, though only

twelve miles distant, was "completing the preparation for the departure of Gen. Franklin's troops by water, and making the necessary arrangements with the naval commander for his co-operation," that we lost 2,288 men in an affair in which we gained nothing and which need not have cost us a man, is all now well understood.

Neither shall we dwell on the extraordinary sluggishness of the march from Williamsburg to the Chickahominy, following the Commanding General's boastful declaration that he should "push the enemy to the wall." (A dispatch, by the by, which he has suppressed in this report.) We shall only stop to call attention to the dispatch of the Secretary of War of May 18th, (p. 96,) and to the following comment of Gen. McClellan:

It will be observed that this order rendered it impossible for me to use the James River as a line of operations, and forced me to establish our depots on the Pamunkey, and to approach Richmond from the north.

I had advised and preferred that reinforcements should be sent by water, for the reason that their arrival would be more safe and certain, and that I would be left free to rest the army on the James River whenever the navigation of that stream should be opened.

The land movement obliged me to expose my right in order to secure the junction, and as the order for Gen. McDowell's march was soon countermanded, I incurred great risk, of which the enemy finally took advantage, and frustrated the plan of the campaign.

We here remark that it was at *Roper's Church*, where the army was on the 11th of May, that it was necessary to decide whether we would cross the Chickahominy near that place and approach the James, (then open to us by the destruction of the Merrimac,) or continue on the Williamsburg road to Richmond. The great mistake of not taking the James River route was made eight days previous to the date of this order, and was due to Gen. McClellan's total ignorance of the topography of the country he was operating in, to his want of due appreciation of the superior value of the James as a base, and *not* to an order received eight days later.

In his eagerness to make this grave charge against the War Department, and to manufacture excuses for his oversight, (to use a very mild term,) he has forgotten his own evidence, given under oath, before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, as follows:

Question.—Could not the advance on Richmond from Williamsburg have been made with better prospect of success by the James River than by the route pursued, and what were the reasons for taking the route adopted?

Answer.—I do not think that the navy at that time was in a condition to make the line of the James River perfectly sure for our supplies. The line of the Pamunkey offered greater advantages in that respect. The place was in a better position to effect a junction with any troops that might move from Washington on the Fredericksburg line. I remember that the idea of moving on the James River was seriously discussed at that time. But the conclusion was arrived at that, under the circumstances then existing, the route actually followed was the best. I think the Merrimac was destroyed while we were at Williamsburg.

Next to the taking away of McDowell's corps the most important specification against the Administration for interference, has been founded upon the compelling of General McClellan to

* It was also known that there were strong defensive works at or near Williamsburg. (McClellan's Report, p. 74.)

base himself upon the York and Pamunkey rivers, instead of the James, in order to connect with McDowell, and General McClellan himself does not scruple to assert it, though, in so doing, he contradicts himself. The stamp of disingenuous afterthought—so palpable on every page of the report to those who are familiar with the march of events of this campaign—is here made palpable to the general reader.

On the 18th of May our depot was firmly established on the York river. The army was well nigh up to the Chickahominy, the right wing on the New Bridge road, the left wing on the Bottom's Bridge road.

General Barnard has given in his report a concise description of that (now) well-known stream, calling it "one of the most formidable military obstacles that could be opposed to the advance of an army; an obstacle to which an ordinary river, though it be of considerable magnitude, is comparatively slight." Formidable as it was, General B. further remarks, "the barrier of the Chickahominy being left unguarded at Bottom's Bridge, no time should have been lost in making use of the circumstance to turn and seize the passage of New Bridge, which might have been done by the 28th, and even earlier, had measures been pressed for taking it."

In reference to the same period and the same obstacle we find in the report before us, (p. 100, 1st par.) "In view of the peculiar character of the Chickahominy, and the liability of its bottom land to sudden inundation, it became necessary to construct between Bottom's Bridge and Mechanicsville, eleven (11) new bridges, all long and difficult, with extensive log-way approaches."

It may here be remarked that we knew as little of the "peculiar character of the Chickahominy" and "the liability of its bottom land to sudden inundations" as we confessedly did of the topography and roads and physical character of this whole region—nothing at all.

The "eleven new bridges," (including in this enumeration the railroad bridge, Bottom's Bridge, and New Bridge,) are here emphatically mentioned as if *at that date*, (May 24,) it was as "necessary to construct" all these; as if the construction of each and all had been part of the programme, preliminary to any further motion. If this is not asserted, the idea is conveyed by the 1st par., p. 100, and confirmed by the 8th and 9th. ("The work upon the bridges was commenced at once," &c., &c.)

By reference to General Barnard's report, (p. 21,) it will be seen that, at this period, three points for bridges were selected in front of the right wing of the army near "New Bridge," viz.: one, a half mile above; another, the same distance below the "New Bridge;" and the New Bridge itself. The latter was the crossing of the turnpike, and required no more than an hour or two of work in throwing a pontoon bridge, *when the time of crossing should come*. The other two required corduroy work, which

could not be done at all, (at least it was not part of the plan to do it,) until the same moment should arrive. All that could be done is stated in General Barnard's report, viz.: to "collect the bridge materials and corduroy stuff;" nor was any very extensive work anticipated, as the bottom lands were quite dry, and no inundation had yet occurred or was anticipated. General McClellan was not waiting for the bridges, but the bridges were waiting for General McClellan. At Bottom's Bridge, (one of the "eleven,") two new bridges had been completed, approaches and all, on the 23d, (May.) On the 27th the railroad bridge was completely repaired.

Intermediate between Bottom's Bridge and the three points mentioned by General Barnard, (where alone a passage was to be forced,) General Sumner had built two bridges with long corduroy approaches through the swamp; they were both finished about the 23th. There was no enemy to oppose their construction.

Gen. Barnard says: "So far as engineering operations were concerned, the whole army could have been thrown over as early as the 28th." And such an operation was daily looked for in the army, and was the avowed intention of Gen. McClellan.

But, (between Gen. McClellan's plans and their execution there is *always* a "but,") "a considerable force on his right flank" caused him to delay and to send off Porter to achieve his "glorious victories" which so puzzled the President, and of which he is so unable to "appreciate the magnitude."

This really useless expedition was undertaken just at the moment when Gen. McClellan was "ready," (if he ever was ready,) to force the passage of the Chickahominy. The last few days of comparatively dry ground, favorable for the execution of this operation, were thus lost. On the 30th, the tremendous rain storm set in which inundated the swamp and bottom lands. On the 31st, the enemy attacked our isolated left wing. Had he delayed the attack twenty-four hours, it would have been fatal to that wing, and put a disastrous period to the campaign; for Sumner could not have crossed, and the two corps assailed would have been crushed without his aid. Man cannot control the elements indeed, and man, perhaps, could not foresee this inundation; but every delay, in military affairs, is a risk, and such proved to be the risks which this needless delay involved—a delay voluntarily incurred in a false and dangerous position.

The promptness of Sumner, and the intelligent foresight he displayed, enabled him to reach the field, and to turn defeat into victory. His columns were formed and their heads pushed up to the bridges, that, when the expected order should come, he might be at once in motion. Thereafter the battles which ensued took the usual course. Gen. Sumner, the highest officer of the army next to Gen. McClellan, arrived late in the day, with a part of his corps, to meet the enemy on ground he had never

seen—to aid another body of troops the positions of which he knew nothing of. Rightfully, after his arrival, he commanded on the battle-field, but neither he nor Gen. Heintzleman encountered each other, nor could act with intelligent reference to each other's position. No sup me head, knowing the whole ground, gave unity to action or coherences to the masses. On the second day, indeed, Gen. McClellan, when the serious work of the day was ended, made his appearance.

The enemy being finally repulsed, at an early hour on Sunday, (June 1st,) the "only available means" of uniting our forces at Fair Oaks for an advance on Richmond, and thus to obtain some results from our victory, was *not* to march them twenty-three miles, as described p. 112, (a considerable exaggeration of the necessary average march of the army by the route described,) but to move a force from Sumner's command to take possession of the heights near Garnett's and Mrs. Price's houses, and *then* to bring over our right wing by the New Bridge, (actually made and passable for troops and artillery at 8:15 A. M. on the morning of June 1st.) A single division could have cleared those heights.

Gen. McClellan states, (p. 113):

In short, the idea of uniting the two wings of the army in time to make a vigorous pursuit of the enemy, with the prospect of overtaking him before he reached Richmond, only five miles distant from the field of battle, is simply absurd, and was, I presume, never for a moment seriously entertained by any one connected with the Army of the Potomac.

An ingenious evasion of the real point at issue. It was not to "overtake the enemy before he reached Richmond," but to *follow him up into Richmond*, that constituted a "taking advantage" of the victory of "Fair Oaks." That we might have entered Richmond, all the information since obtained goes to prove. Wm. Henry Harbert says:

The roads into Richmond were literally crowded with stragglers, some throwing away their guns, some breaking them on the trees—all with the same story, that their regiments had been "cut to pieces;" that the "Yankees were swarming on the Chickahominy like bees," and "fighting like devils." In two days of the succeeding week the provost marshal's guards collected between 4,000 and 5,000 stragglers and sent them into camp. What had become of the command no one knew.

Gen. Heintzleman states that, "after the enemy retired, he gave orders to pursue them;" that he "countermanded" the order on Sunday, in consequence of Gen. Kearney's suggestion and allegation that "Gen. McClellan would order a general advance in two or three days." The next morning, on learning that the enemy had fallen back in great confusion, he sent his troops "forward, and they got within about four miles of Richmond;" but, on sending word of it to Gen. McClellan, he was ordered to "stop and fall back to the old lines."

Gen. Sumner testifies:

"If we had attacked with our whole force, we should have swept everything before us;" and "I think the majority of the officers who were there think so now."

Gen. Keyes testifies:

After the battle of Seven Pines there was another time when I think, if the army had pressed on after the enemy with great vigor, we should have gone to Richmond; and in connection with this last, I am compelled to state that I think Gen. McClellan does not excel in that quality which enables him to know when to spring.

We have, thus positively, the opinions of the commanders of the three corps engaged in the battle.

The Prince de Joinville says:

Some persons thought, and think still, that if, instead of Sumner alone, all the divisions of the right wing had been ordered to cross the river, the order would have been executed. It is easy to see what must have happened if, instead of 15,000, 50,000 men had been thrown upon Johnston's flank. But Sumner's bridge, no doubt, would not have sufficed for the passage of such a force. At midnight the rear of his column was still struggling slowly to cross this rude structure, against all the difficulties of a roadway formed of trunks, which slipped and rolled under the horses' feet, of a muddy morass at either end, and of a pitchy dark night rendered darker still by the density of the forest. But several other bridges were ready to be thrown across at other points. Not a moment should have been lost in fixing them, and no regard should have been paid to the efforts of the enemy to prevent this from being done. *Johnston had paraded a brigade ostentatiously, as a sort of scarecrow, at the points which were most fitting for this enterprise; but the stake was so small, the result to be sought after so important, the occasion so unexpected and so favorable for striking a decisive blow, that, in our judgment, nothing should have prevented the army from attempting this operation at every risk.* Here again it paid the penalty of that American tardiness which is more marked in the character of the army than in that of its leader. It was not till seven in the evening that the resolution was taken of throwing over all the bridges, and passing the whole army over by daybreak to the right bank. It was too late.

The Prince here labors under that inexcusable confusion of ideas which arises from an amiable unwillingness to carry his own convictions to a logical conclusion. "It was not till seven in the evening that the resolution was taken," &c. Now, the army had been waiting for several days for that "resolution" to be taken; the moment it was taken the bridge building commenced. The rising flood and the darkness of the night interfered with the progress till daylight dawned; but at eight o'clock the next morning one bridge was finished, and the passage practicable for all arms; during the day too other passages became practicable for infantry. So far from being too late, the bridges were ready just in time.

The Prince further says:

What might not have happened, if at this moment the 35,000 fresh troops on the other bank of the Chickahominy could have appeared upon the flank of this disordered army, after passing the bridges in safety!

Gen. Barnard states (p. 23 of his "Report") that "at 8.15 A. M., (June 1st,) the pontoon bridge at the site of New Bridge was complete and practicable for infantry, cavalry and artillery. About noon the "upper trestle bridge" was practicable for infantry. It was not till night that a practicable bridge for infantry was obtained at the "lower trestle bridge." He adds, that owing to the overflowed condition of the bottom lands, the two last bridges could not be made practicable for "cavalry or artillery" without extensive corduroying. He further remarks: "There was one way, however, to unite the army on the other side; it

was to take advantage of a victory at Fair Oaks, to sweep at once the enemy from his position opposite New Bridge, and simultaneously to bring over, by the New Bridge," (with which, we remark, a raised turnpike communicated,) "our troops of the right wing, which could then have met with little or no resistance. * * * * *

We have passed through one crisis, and have shown that it was *invited* by the dispositions of Gen. McClellan, by which our army was permitted to be for a whole week divided into two distinct portions, entirely isolated. This arrangement took place at a moment when Gen. McClellan avows his belief that the enemy's numbers "greatly exceeded our own," and that he has every reason to expect desperate work. (p. 98.) The weaker of the two isolated portions was thrust forward to within seven miles of Richmond, with no obstacle whatever between it and the enemy's superior forces, on ground that had no natural strength, and to which little artificial strength could be given, under the circumstances. The position, too, in which our troops were thus risked was never seen by the Commanding General until after the battle of Fair Oaks.

The weakness of the enemy, combined with his blunders, alone saved us. Gen. McClellan did not believe in his weakness—he had no right to count on his blunders. *Such* is the generalship which can do nothing "rapid or brilliant," owing to the alleged numerical weakness, but which, in delay, hesitation, and uncertainty, incurs risks such as the rashest of daring and energetic generals seldom encounter.

The failure of the enemy to crush our left wing, though he unquestionably exerted his whole strength to do it, might well shake Gen. McClellan's credulity with regard to his "superior numbers," and authorize his otherwise illogical statement (see telegram, June 7th, p. 115) that he should be "*in perfect readiness*" to move forward and "*take Richmond* the moment McClellan reaches here and the ground will admit the passage of artillery." With "superior numbers" of the enemy and "strong works" around Richmond, it is astonishing with what facility he is always "taking Richmond"—*in his dispatches!*

Again, (June 10,) though he has information that "Beauregard has arrived," and "some of his troops are to follow him," he announces, "I shall attack as soon as the weather and ground will permit;" and he reiterates in the same dispatch, lest he should not be understood or believed, "I wish to be distinctly understood that whenever the weather permits I will attack with whatever force I may have," &c. (p. 116.)

McCall arrived on the 12th and 13th. The rains of the early part of the month slackened as the month advanced, so that on the 14th the General announces, "weather now very favorable." The ground grew firmer as the June sun continued to act upon it, and by the 20th artillery could operate with facility. On this

date the General telegraphs that he has "no doubt Jackson has been reinforced from here." Now, then, is the time to "move forward" and to "take Richmond." But, instead of "perfect readiness," we hear the "difficulties of the country" expatiated upon—we learn that "by to-morrow night" certain defensive works will be finished—that the construction of these "defensive works" is rendered necessary by his "inferiority of numbers," so that he can bring the "greatest possible numbers into action," &c., &c. Instead of "*attacking with whatever force he has*"—instead of "perfect readiness" to act, (though he learns the enemy has been reduced by detachments,) he is waiting for "defensive works;" and, instead of "taking Richmond," or doing anything toward it, he "would be glad to have permission to lay before the President, by letter or telegraph, his views as to the *present state of military affairs throughout the whole country*!"

Bear in mind that, two months before, Gen. McClellan had been relieved from a position which made the expression of such views a part of his official duty; and now *after* having been so relieved, at *such* a moment as this, when the President is eagerly scanning each telegram to know if the army has really "advanced" and "taken Richmond," he is astounded to find only an offer of "views" on the "present state of military affairs throughout the whole country," coupled with a modest request to know "the numbers and position of the troops not under his command in Virginia or elsewhere." In other words, Gen. McClellan, in a moment so critical to himself, and under circumstances which should concentrate all his thoughts upon the work immediately in hand, asks to be informed of the numbers and positions of all the troops of the United States!

So neither McCall's arrival nor fine weather constituted "perfect readiness to advance." All the "eleven" bridges are finished—even the "defensive works" will be ready "by to-morrow night" (viz., June 21,)—and yet he does not "move forward."

Here is something, at least, that ought to start him. Thus far, "all the information previous to June 24," &c., (p. 119) induced the belief that Jackson was at Gordonsville, receiving reinforcements from Richmond. Now (June 24,) Gen. McClellan learns that Jackson was moving to Fredericksburg with his own troops and all those "reinforcements" that had gone to him, for the purpose of "attacking my rear on the 28th."

Surely now is the time, if ever, to "move forward," in two or three days the enemy will receive heavy reinforcements. So, at last, on the 25th, our bridges and intrenchments being "at last completed," (N. B. The bridges were all completed by the 19th, the "defensive works" were announced June 20, as "to be completed to-morrow night," viz., June 21st, and, we remark, they were ready enough *at any time* for an advance,) *something* is really to be done. The reader holds his breath to know what is to

follow—it is “*an advance of our picket lines of the left preparatory to a general forward movement.*” One would think that the art of “preparation” had been exhausted, but if so simple as to believe that the time for *preparing* to do a thing ever ends, and the time of executing it ever commences, his military education could not have been acquired under Maj. Gen. McClellan. *This preparatory operation at any rate must be the last.* But alas! though “successful in what we have undertaken,” the courage which, in the morning, was screwed up to order “an advance of our picket line of the left, preparatory to a general forward movement,” has all oozed out by “6.15 P. M.” “Several contrabands,” (we hope they were intelligent!) “just in,” announce that “Jackson’s advance is at or near Hanover C. H.,” that the perpetual bugbear, Beauregard, “had arrived,” and that the rebel “force is stated at 200,000 men, including Jackson and Beauregard.”*

The “general forward movement” of the morning is totally forgotten after the interview with these “contrabands,” and we have this feeble announcement: “But this army will do all in the power of men to hold their position and repulse any attack.” Regretting his “inferiority of numbers,” for which he is not “responsible,” he “will do all that he can do with the splendid army he has the honor to command,” (Oh, that in such a moment surely every reader will aspire such an army *had but a leader*.) and if destroyed by “overwhelming numbers” “can at least die with it and share its fate.” For once, however, he feels that “there is no use in *again* asking for reinforcements.”

Thus in the morning we are treated with a grand “preparatory movement,” (what the particular necessity of losing a whole day, when time was so precious, in this absurd manner, the uninitiated can scarcely comprehend,) for a “general advance,” and by sunset we have this feeble wail of despair. Does any one believe that any such sudden and portentous change had come over the state of affairs, as would justify such a change in the spirit of the General, or that the tales of “several contrabands” could so completely turn the tables? If he does not believe this, then the alternative is to believe the report which contains such statements to be a mere veil—transparently thin—with painful labor, drawn over the writer’s conscious ignorance of his own plans, intentions, or situation.

He goes on to say, (p. 122,) “on the 26th, the day upon which *I had decided as the time of our final advance*,” (it has already been at least six days since the whole category of conditions for moving forward and taking Richmond has been fulfilled, and six days since an additional condition turned up in his favor—the reinforcing of Jackson at Gordonsville, *from Richmond*—it has been two days since he learned that

the powerful corps of Jackson, thus reinforced, was but two or three days march off, on his way to join Lee,) “the enemy attacked our right in force, and turned my attention to the protection of our *communications and depots of supply*,” both of which, by the by, were lost, and were *expected to be lost*, since he telegraphs the Secretary of War “not to be discouraged if you learn that my communications are cut off and even Yorktown in possession of the enemy.”

Now, on the morning of the 26th, Jackson’s main body was yet a *full day’s* march off. It was noon on the 26th, (p. 124,) before the enemy was discovered to be in motion, and 3 p. m., (p. 125,) before he had “formed his line of battle” to attack McCall, at Beaver Dam Creek. The troops which attacked on the 26th were not Jackson’s, but a *part of the very force Gen. McClellan was to have attacked himself*. Thus we learn the curious and astonishing fact that the “general forward movement,” or, as styled, p. 122, “our final advance decided upon for that day,” was postponed and abandoned in consequence of an attack of the enemy’s which took place at 3 p. m. of the same day!

Now if the case was really hopeless, we would fold our hands in resignation, only asking why the conclusion was not arrived at three weeks earlier; for we affirm that nothing happened up to the 26th to make a “moving forward and taking Richmond” more impracticable than when Gen. McClellan, (on the 7th,) announced that he should be “in perfect readiness” when McCall arrived and the ground dried—conditions all fulfilled as early as the 26th. Even to the 25th nothing that has occurred has daunted the ostensible determination to “advance and take Richmond,” and a grand “preparatory” movement to a “general forward movement” was ordered. But man cannot control events, and who could forbode that, almost simultaneously with the order for “an advance of our picket line of the left preparatory,” &c., &c., *several contrabands* would be on their way with tidings of Beauregard and Jackson! that a “final advance” for to-morrow, (the 26th,) will be utterly frustrated by a counter advance made by a disobliging enemy at three o’clock in the afternoon of that day!

Truly “the case is a difficult one,” but we need not loose hope, for the General will do his best to “out-manuever, out-wit, and out-fight the enemy.”

With an army of 100,000 men *present for duty*—an enemy divided into two portions, even if “greatly superior in number, we would fancy something might be done, even had we not this voluntary pledge of brilliant generalship. Indeed it has been our notion that these were just the circumstances that called for energetic action—a prompt and bold *imitative* on the part of a general.

Admitting that the enemy really numbered, (as is stated on the authority of the “secret service,”) 180,000 men, and admitting that the “advance” on to Richmond had ceased to be practicable and that a retreat to the James

* As early as June 10, the General has “information that Beauregard had arrived,” and “that some of his troops were to follow him.” The “contrabands” bring no news after all.

River had become the best course, why amuse us in this official *Report of past* events with the pretence, kept up till the 25th, nay, to the 26th, of a "general forward movement?" Such a movement was surely more practicable while Jackson was at Gordonsville, or even when only three marches off, than when he arrived. Why, if *really intended*, was it not made?

In view of a retreat to the James River it was wise to hold the position at Beaver Dam on the 26th. All Porter's baggage train might have been, (and we believe *was*.) brought over on that day. So might have been the "siege guns." It was a blunder unparalleled to expose Porter's corps to fight a battle by itself on the 27th against overwhelming forces of the enemy. With perfect ease that corps might have been brought over on the night of the 26th, and if nothing more brilliant could have been thought of, the movement to the James River might have been in full tide of execution on the 27th. A more propitious moment could not have been chosen, for, besides Jackson's own forces, A. P. Hill's and Longstreet's corps were on the north (left) bank of the Chickahominy on the night of the 26th. Such a movement need not have been discovered to the enemy till far enough advanced to insure success. At any rate he could have done no better in preventing it than he actually did afterwards. The Prince de Joinville, conceding the necessity of the movement says, "there was a vast difference between making this *retreat*," (styling it very properly what it was,) "in one's own time and by a free, spontaneous movement, and making it hastily under the threatening pressure of two hostile armies;" and surely the difference became vaster when, instead of being made merely *under pressure*, it became the necessary result of a decided defeat.

[Gen. Barnard affirms that 180,000, is an absurd over-estimate of the enemy's numbers; that even the "secret service" estimates do not warrant it, since 500 men to a battalion was considered an ample allowance, and the 200 battalions and other organizations would not make over 120,000 men at utmost; that Wm. H. T. Hurlbert, who was in Richmond at the time, makes the number but 120,000; and finally, that the rebel Gen. Stuart, in an interview with one of our general officers, not long after, *pledged his honor*, that Lee's forces did not exceed *ninety thousand*.]

Conceding, however, to Gen. McClellan an adversary which his "secret service," aided by "several contrabands," had conjured up, the passive inactivity with which he met this crisis forfeits for him every claim to generalship even of the most indifferent character. With an enemy 180,000 strong, divided in two distinct portions, we believe that there might have been found some way of displaying generalship; at least, with entrenchments on the right bank of the Chickahominy which 20,000 men could have held against 100,000, he need not have permitted one third of his army to be

defeated on the other bank, within sight and cannon range of the other two thirds. But, considering the *real strength* of his enemy, (as we believe it to have been,) a more lamentable failure to fulfill "hopes formerly placed in him," a more striking instance, not so much of being "out-witted" as of destitution of "wit," and of unreadiness in action, is scarcely to be found in military annals.

The enemy having been checked at Beaver Dam Creek in the afternoon of the 26th, no time should have been lost in withdrawing from this position and in bringing Porter over the Chickahominy, as could have been done with the greatest ease on the night of the 26th. If he had been determined, however, to fight on that side, he should have been withdrawn in the night to the position selected, and at the same time reinforced with the whole of our left wing, except 20,000 men to hold the entrenchments and Bottom's Bridge, and to guard the passage of the White Oak swamp. Thirty or forty thousand men should have been sent over to Porter.

Gen. McCall who commanded the force at Beaver Dam Creek which received the rebel attack under A. P. Hill on the 26th, says in reference to the order to withdraw:

"This order, I confess, gave me some concern. *Had it reached me at midnight*, the movement might have been made without difficulty and without loss; but now it would be daylight before the movement which, under fire, is one of the most delicate and difficult in the art of war, could be commenced.

The movement ordered at nightfall of the 26th, could have been executed without risk or damage. Delayed till morning, it involved the risk of the utter destruction of Porter's corps of 27,000 men. Not a *slight* risk merely, such as we must constantly incur in making war, but a serious risk, and, moreover, a totally unnecessary one. Porter acknowledged his hesitation to give the order for withdrawing his force, and even seemed, when morning came, inclined to suspend it, alleging the fear that McCall's division would be *cut to pieces*. Not only McCall's division, but Porter's whole command, were in fearful risk of being "cut to pieces" or captured, by being where they were that morning of the 27th, as we shall show.

Gen. Stoneman, with a small command of infantry and cavalry, had been sent towards "Old Church" to obstruct roads, destroy bridges, and prevent, as far as possible, Porter's right from being turned. Jackson, who, in marching from Hanover C. H., kept well towards the Pamunkey, with the obvious intention of turning Porter's right, on coming in sight of Stoneman's troops near "Old Church," bore off towards Mechanicsville. His troops filed past in full view of Stoneman from 4 p. m. till after dark, and were estimated by him at 35,000 strong. (Jackson *now* had, besides his own troops, those "reinforcements" which we have seen were sent a week or two ago out of Richmond, to join him. Let us suppose that Jackson, instead of being diverted from his course

by the handful of troops of Stoneman, (and it is astonishing that he should have been,) had kept on toward Cold Harbor. Porter's case would have been hopeless.

He bore off towards Mechanicsville, and encamped somewhere near Shady Grove Church. Had he put his troops in motion before dawn, and marched parallel to Porter's line of retreat, he could have attacked his retiring columns, and rendered it difficult, if not impossible, for him to reach the position where he actually gave battle. Finally, that the force of Porter was not utterly destroyed by its defeat, is due simply to the fact (not to have been expected) that the enemy did not commence his attack till 3½ p. m., and did not accomplish his victory until after nightfall. These, it may be urged, were risks incidental to war; but they were risks of the gravest character, and we are unable to see what equivalent risks (rather than positive advantages) would have attended the withdrawal of Porter the night of the 26th.

Gen. McClellan announces that "the object we sought for had been obtained." "The enemy was held at bay." (But why incur a disastrous defeat to hold him "at bay" in a position where he could not attack us unless we chose to be attacked.) "Our siege guns and materials were saved." (Everything was brought over on the 26th except the siege guns, and they might have been,) "and the right wing now joined the main body of the army," (which it might have done on the night of the 26th.)

Per contra, we lost twenty-two guns, "captured by the enemy," (better have abandoned and spiked the "siege artillery" than to have lost in battle twenty-two guns.) We lost in killed and wounded 9,000 men, when Porter might have been withdrawn without the loss of a man, and we incurred a disheartening defeat besides.

Two defensive battles have now been fought on the Chickahominy, and Gen. McClellan has either blundered into fighting them, or been compelled, by the circumstances of his position, to fight them, the first with about one half, the second with less than one third of his force; and now, (not a single offensive action having occurred during this invasive campaign,) with a "splendid army," as he rightly styles it, he is forced, though still superior, or at least equal in numbers, to "change his base," or in other words, to beat a retreat.

He has spent weeks in building bridges, which establish a close connection between the wings of his army, and then fights a great battle with a smaller fraction of his army than when he had a single available bridge, and that remote. He, with great labor constructs "defensive works," in order that he "may bring the greatest possible numbers into action," and again exhibits his ability to utilize his means by keeping 65,000 men idle behind them, while 35,000, unaided by "defensive works" of any kind, fight the bulk of his adversary's forces, and are of course overwhelmed by "superior numbers."

[After stating that, according even to the enemy's own confessions, had Gen. McClellan instead of fighting a useless and disastrous battle with one third of his forces on the 27th, united his army the night of the 26th and marched on Richmond, he would have had a fair chance of success. Gen. B. proceeds to describe the subsequent battles of the "Seven Days."]

On the 30th of June our army stretched across the country from White Oak Swamp Bridge to the James, occupying a line about eight miles long. Franklin held the right at the bridge, Porter and Keyes the extreme left. Further than midway (about five miles) from the James, this long line of battle was intersected by two (the "Charles City" and the "New Market" or "Long Bridge") converging roads. Here was the decisive point—if the line should be broken here it would be the destruction of our army. Here, too, the enemy made a desperate effort. Lee commanded in person, and Longstreet's and A. P. Hill's veteran divisions, numbering 18,000 to 20,000 men, made the attack. Jeff. Davis himself was said to be present. (So Gen. McCall, while a prisoner that evening, was informed.) It was an eventful day and an eventful point; central, too, to the general position of the army. Where was the Commanding General during this battle? At the very extreme left, and for a considerable portion of the time on a gunboat, (see p. 135,) "having made arrangements for instant communication by signals." Read the report of Gen. McCall, the extracts from those of Sumner, and Heintzleman, and others, and their testimony before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, and see how much the control of the Commanding General was needed; his knowledge of the field, and of the positions of the different troops. Then think of the disastrous consequences that would have followed the breaking of our line at that point. (Longstreet informed Gen. McCall that Lee had 70,000 men bearing on it, all of which would arrive before midnight,) and let each one form his own conclusion as to whether the Commanding General had on this occasion any appreciation of his duties, or, if he had, whether he discharged them.

"It was very late at night," says General McClellan, "before my aids returned to give me the results of the day's fighting along the whole line, and the true position of affairs." It may well be doubted whether, in all the recorded reports or "dispatches" of military commanders, a parallel to this extraordinary avowal can be found. We supposed it the especial business of a general to know, at each moment, "the true position of affairs," and to have some agency in ruling it. Here we find the "day's fighting" all done, the results, for better or worse, accomplished, and "very late at night" the Commanding General just learning about them! "Very late at night" General Franklin concluded he could no longer hold his position, and retired, sending word to Generals Sumner and Heintzleman. These officers, though they assert they received no such message, heard of

the movement, somehow, and wisely concluded that they must retire, too. Here again was a matter of the gravest importance, which, that it should be decided at the proper time, required the Commanding General to be at hand—to know, promptly, “the situation” and the “results of the day’s fighting.” General McClellan makes no pretence that he gave any orders to Franklin, nor that he would have given any to the other corps commanders had not Franklin, *without orders*, fallen back. He affirms that on learning of Franklin’s withdrawal he *sent orders* to Sumner and Heintzleman to withdraw, but admits that they were both in motion *without his orders*. Now, had not this withdrawal taken place that night, the next day would have probably witnessed the destruction of the Army of the Potomac. Lee, as we have seen, was at the very central point, ready to break in, with a force of 70,000 men, as stated by Longstreet to General McCall. The salvation of the army was due, not to McClellan’s arrangements or foresight, but to General Franklin’s fortunate decision to withdraw. The army was saved *in spite* of General McClellan’s ignorance of the “position of affairs” and “results of the day’s fighting,” and consequent incapacity to give intelligent orders.

Our army is now concentrated on the James; but we have another day’s fighting before us, and this day we may expect the concentrated attack of Lee’s whole army. We know not at what hour it will come—possibly late, for it requires time to find out our new position and to bring together the attacking columns—yet we know not when it will come. Where, *this day*, is the Commanding General? Off, with Captain Rodgers, to select “the final positions of the army and its depots.” He does not tell us that it was on a gunboat, and that this day not even “signals” would keep him in communication with his army, for his journey was ten or fifteen miles down the river; and he was thus absent till late in the afternoon.

This is the first time we ever had reason to believe that the highest and first duty of a general, on the day of battle, was, separating himself from his army, to reconnoitre a place of retreat! However that may be, that night and the day following, the whole army, with the exception of General Keyes’ corps, marched into a cul-de-sac from which it could not have been extricated had the enemy been able promptly to follow us up.

We think it will now be understood why “a large number of General McClellan’s highest officers—indeed a majority of those whose opinions have been reported to me,” (see General Halleck’s letter, p. 157) are in favor of “the withdrawal from the James.” If the enemy *was*, indeed, as General McClellan estimated, (General Halleck’s letter, p. 156) 200,000 strong, and daily increasing, a renewal of an offensive campaign from the James was simple madness. Once, by his own accounts, he had been foiled and driven back, with no little hazard of the ruin of his army, by “superior numbers,” and

now he proposes to march again with 120,000 (about what his army would have numbered with the 30,000 reinforcements he asked; against Richmond, held by 200,000 men. No one who has read attentively the report before us, and the dispatches therein contained, will be surprised at the want of logical sequence in any particular plan, statement, or argument, since complete destitution of such a quality is the characteristic of the whole; but any intelligent reader will understand that there were no rational chances of success, particularly after recent experiences, in “advancing on Richmond” defended by an army of 200,000 men injured to battles and elated by success, with but 120,000 men. He can understand, too, that *another* disastrous repulse in this region was likely to result in the loss of the army and the capture of Washington—indeed, the ruin of the cause.

If the enemy had 200,000 men it was to be seriously apprehended that, leaving 50,000 behind the “strong works” of Richmond, he would march at once with 150,000 men on Washington. Why should he not? General McClellan and his eulogists have held up as highly meritorious strategy the leaving of Washington defended by less than 50,000 men, with the enemy in its front estimated to be 120,000 to 150,000 strong, and moving off to take an eccentric line of operations against Richmond; and now the *reverse case is presented*, but with an important difference. The enemy at Manassas, on learning General McClellan’s movement, could either fly to the defence of Richmond or attack Washington. *Gen. McClellan says that this latter course was not to be feared.* McClellan on the James, on learning that Lee with 150,000 men is marching on Washington, *can only* attack Richmond; by no possibility can he fly to the defence of Washington. Besides, he is inferior in numbers (according to his own estimate) even to Lee’s marching army. Here, in a nutshell, is the demonstration of the folly of the grand strategic movement on Richmond, as given by its own projector.

If the enemy had nothing like 200,000 men—(and a very reliable estimate put his forces in the early part of August at about 55,000 *around Richmond*, and the rest with Jackson confronting Pope, probably not more than 40,000)—if he never had had more than 90,000, or at the utmost 120,000—if Gen. McClellan had been driven away from Richmond by equal or inferior numbers, there were still strong reasons, (which we need not indicate,) after the recent experience undergone, for not permitting him to incur the hazard of another advance.

The critical situation of affairs at this period, the urgent necessity of providing for the safety of Washington and of effecting the reunion into one whole of our shattered and reduced armies in Virginia, demanded imperatively the withdrawal from the James. The great misfortune was that the order was not given immediately on our reaching Harrison’s Landing.

Had Gen. McClellan made his “reports” of

the various actions of the Army of the Potomac as they occurred, he would probably have done himself more credit, (though the slight specimen we have in his report made July 15th, of the Seven Days' battles hardly warrants this opinion,) than he has by this laborious but disingenuous production. He has, however, done the country and done history a service. In giving so many of his own dispatches he has furnished the truest tests of his actual abilities as a general and a thinker, and in the matter and in the arrangement of it he has given us an illustration of his animus as a historian. In this point of view the Report may be safely recommended to readers of all classes and all parties. In taking leave of the Army of the Potomac he somewhat ostentatiously promised to make himself the historian of its exploits, and we have before us now, in the pages we have just examined, the result of his six months' moulage on such a theme.

"Whoever has committed no faults has not made war" was the remark of one of the great marshals of France when questioned as to the cause of a defeat, and acknowledging it to have been the result of his own mistakes; and there would have been no lack of indulgence and charity for the failure of an inexperienced subaltern suddenly converted into a general, and called upon to plan campaigns and direct armies of such unusual magnitude, under circumstances

of no ordinary difficulty, were they presented to us in the spirit of Marshal Turenne's avowal; but when exactly the reverse is the case, when the claim to eminent generalship is arrogantly asserted, when plans which we have shown to be lacking in the essential elements of consistency in themselves, and of concert with those who must be depended upon to carry them out, are held up for our admiration, when all faults are denied and the burden of each particular mishap, and, in the end, of the failure of the whole campaign, is thrown upon the Administration; when, in short, the whole Report is one incessant complaint against the President and the War Department, culminating at length in the outrageous charge addressed to the Secretary of War on the eve of Porter's defeat, (a fit *finale* to the two days' blundering,) "You have done your best to sacrifice this army," we think charity should withdraw her mantle from the errors and inconsistencies and incapacity which we here exhibit.

[In the complete work of Gen. Barnard, the author's statements and opinions are supported by voluminous notes containing extracts from the evidence given before the Committee on the Conduct of the War, of Generals Sumner, Heintzleman, Keyes, McCall, Franklin, Hitchcock, Assistant Secretary of the Navy Fox, Admiral Goldsborough, and others, and by citations from other published documents.]

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN FOR 1864.

UNION EXECUTIVE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE.

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JAMES HARLAN, *Treasurer.*

D. N. COOLEY, *Secretary.*

COMMITTEE ROOMS, Washington, D. C., Sept. 2, 1864.

DEAR SIR: The Union Congressional Committee, in addition to the documents already published, propose to issue immediately the following documents for distribution among the people:

1. McClellan's Military Career Reviewed and Exposed.
2. George H. Pendleton, his Disloyal Record and Antecedents.
3. The Chicago Copperhead Convention, the men who composed and controlled it.
4. Base Surrender of the Copperheads to the Rebels in Arms.
5. The Military and Naval Situation, and the Glorious Achievements of our Soldiers and Sailors.
6. A Few Plain Words with the Private Soldier.
7. What Lincoln's Administration has done.
8. The History of McClellan's "Arbitrary Arrest" of the Maryland Legislature.
9. Can the Country Pay the Expenses of the War?
10. Doctrines of the Copperheads North Identical with those of the Rebels South.
11. The Constitution Upheld and Maintained.
12. Rebel Terms of Peace.
13. Peace, to be Enduring, must be Conquered.
14. A History of the Cruelties and Atrocities of the Rebellion.
15. Evidences of a Copperhead Conspiracy in the Northwest.

The above documents will be printed in English and German in eight or sixteen page pamphlets, and sent, postage free, according to directions, at the rate of one or two dollars per hundred copies. The plans and purposes of the Copperheads having been disclosed by the action of the Chicago Convention, they should at once be laid before the loyal people of the country. There is but two months between this and election, and leagues, clubs, and individuals should lose no time in sending in their orders. Remittances should be made in greenbacks or Drafts on New York City, payable to the order of _____.

Address: Free. Hon. JAMES HARLAN, *Washington, D. C.*

Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

D. N. COOLEY, *Secretary.*